DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 466 453 SP 040 867

AUTHOR	Martin, Robin Ann
TITLE	Alternatives in Education: An Exploration of Learner-Centered, Progressive, and Holistic Education.
PUB DATE	2002-04-05
NOTE	33p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 1-5, 2002).
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http://www.PathsofLearning.net/archives/aera2002.htm.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Elementary Secondary Education; Folk Schools; Free Schools; *Holistic Approach; Home Schooling; Montessori Method; *Nontraditional Education; Open Education; *Progressive Education; School Choice
IDENTIFIERS	Krishnamurti (Jiddu); *Learner Centered Instruction; Quakers; Waldorf Schools

ABSTRACT

Based on a database of over 500 resources, this paper explores the educational alternatives that exist today between the cracks of mainstream education and culture. It presents information about the growing numbers of schools and education centers that call themselves learner-centered, progressive, and/or holistic. Sources of data for this summary report also include over 3 years of informal interviews with and observations of people at alternative schools. The paper begins by examining terminology issues, discussing qualities for distinguishing educational alternatives, and describing eight types of schools (democratic and free schools, folk education, Quaker schools, homeschooling/unschooling/deschooling, Krishnamurti schools, Montessori schools, open schools, and Waldorf schools). It also presents frameworks for education (maps for understanding the territories of alternatives), and it discusses the three orientations of a competency based education: transaction (progressive), self-directed (learner-centered), and transformation (holistic). After looking at political issues around school choice which could impact the growth of the various philosophical alternatives, the paper concludes that in a society where issues of pluralism and diversity are valued as part of creating a more sustainable world and just democracy, the diversity of philosophical perspectives in education needs to be acknowledged. (Contains 41 references.) (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

Sp

ED 466 453

Alternatives in Education: An Exploration of Learner-Centered, Progressive, and Holistic Education

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Robin Martin

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Paper and Presentation, Prepared for AERA
April 5, 2002

by Robin Ann Martin
Ph.D. Candidate
Iowa State University

Current contact information:

Robin Martin
EnCompass
11011 Tyler Foote Rd.
Nevada City, CA 95959
U.S.A.

530-292-1617 (h)
530-292-1000 (w)
Email: Robin@PathsOfLearning.net

Copies of this manuscript can also be accessed at:

http://www.PathsofLearning.net/archives/aera2002.htm

SP040867

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Contents:

Introduction 1
Terminology Issues 2
Qualities for Distinguishing Educational Alternatives 3
Types of Schools (and homeschooling) 6
Frameworks for Education: Maps for Understanding the Territories of Alternatives 16
Crisscrossing Frameworks 21
Competency Based Education, three "Orientations" 23
A Word About School Choice Systems 24
Concluding Remarks 26
References 27

Introduction

Too often teachers as well as parents and researchers know little about the diversity of educational choices available. This paper provides an overview and some philosophical grounding for understanding the commonalties and differences among learner-centered, progressive, and/or holistic alternatives in education.

Based on a collection of over 500 resources in the Paths of Learning database, the primary purpose of this paper is to offer both an initial synthesis and exploration into educational alternatives that exist today between the cracks of mainstream education and culture. It presents and organizes information about the growing numbers of schools and education centers that call themselves learner-centered, progressive, and/or holistic. It is not a conclusive writing on any one type of alternative; rather, it is part of a larger project that attempts to create a framework for more meaningful discussion and research into differing types of philosophical alternatives in education.

Using extensive networking efforts, I have connected with many innovative schools, educators, and authors whose focus is integrating living and learning, community and students. While some sources of data for this summary report include over three years of informal interviews and observations with persons at alternative schools, the primary sources have been written materials (books, journals,

dissertations, etc.) that describe and investigate person-centered schools and other learning options for educating students.

Terminology Issues

Confusion in communication and terminology is often the first hurdle for even opening a discussion about educational alternatives. All too frequently, we use the same words to describe different things, or different words to describe the same thing. For example, a concept as frequently used as "freedom" refers to quite different (and often contradictory) concepts depending on the ideology, or mode of thought, from which one is speaking.[1]

Teachers within alternative education may often use the same words as other teachers but mean completely different things. Sometimes they even mean completely different things from each other. When more conventional educators stick to subject matter such as language arts or math as their primary concerns, the ambiguity of words such as freedom, learning, and power can be sidestepped. Indeed, the categories and classifications in traditional performance-based education are much more defined in contrast to the "fuzzy" categories for learning, subject matter, and teaching methods used within educational alternatives.[2]

Even the term "alternative" is ambiguous; for some people (especially in many U.S. states), it implies schools for "at risk" youth only, rather than being for the education of all children and often for adults as well. So sometimes it is useful to distinguish "philosophical alternatives" from the "at-risk alternatives." These philosophical alternatives include educational options for the developmental needs and learning styles of all children, and often for adults as well. However, "philosophical alternatives" is a mouthful, so I often use "alternatives" for short. One might also call many of these alternatives "person-centered approaches to education," drawing on terminology established by Carl Rogers. However, some of the alternatives may draw more on the work of John Dewey or even A.S. Neill, such that "person-centered" may not be an accurate descriptor. Further, the phrase "approaches to education" can imply individual classroom settings, school settings, or general curricular or developmental theories. For the purposes of this paper, I wish to stay within a framework of schools, or places like schools.

Other words used in place of "alternative" by different authors include non-traditional, non-conventional, or non-standardized. Unfortunately, these words sometimes have negative connotations as well as multiple meanings. Also some alternatives may look traditional, conventional, or even "standardized" to the untrained eye, until you see inside more closely.

Within the field of alternatives, words such as authentic, holistic, and progressive are frequently used as well; however, these words each have different meanings which are more specific or more ambiguous than simply "alternative." Therefore, I'm sticking with "alternatives" for simplicity's sake.

The term "school" may also be misnomer. Many educational alternatives do not call themselves "schools," feeling that this implies a traditional square building with classrooms where students sit in rows of desks and are led by a teacher. However, when I use the word "school" throughout this paper, it implies those *places where people gather intentionally to learn* (with no implications of what, why, or how). Of course, many schools are no longer solitary "places" (like school buildings) but include multiple sites for meeting within the community as well as within nature. The advent of "virtual schools" and "virtual communities" further complicates matters because some schools are now gatherings of minds and hearts without a physical location for bodies to meet.

Thus, the only real thing that most schools still have in common are people and the intentionality for learning. Aside from referring to schools, the word "educational alternatives" in this paper also includes community learning centers, homeschooling communities, cooperative life-long learning centers, and an assortment of other *learning communities*.[3]

Qualities for Distinguishing Educational Alternatives

> *Choosing a school for a child is one of the most important decisions parents make. The school -- its teachers, curriculum, educational philosophy, and values both explicit and implicit -- will affect the child's day-to-day life. It will help shape the child's personality, view of life, behavior, and destiny as an adult. And it will also deeply affect the lives of the parents and the life of the family as a whole.* -Ronald Koetzsch (1997, p. x)

In 1994, MacMillan Publishing released the *Almanac of Education Choices*, which at that time listed over 6,000 progressive and holistic schools and homeschooling resource centers (Mintz, 1994). Even if parents have only a few alternatives in their local community, in addition to visiting those schools, understanding the underlying differences between alternatives can inform their selection. In addition, for teachers and educational researchers, there is little that has been done to provide a comprehensive overview of the entire context of educational alternatives that might give greater insight into the particular approaches within which they are working.

The schools and learning communities described in this paper feature both commonalties as well as differences. In an attempt to speak to those even within education who are as yet

unfamiliar with the many educational alternatives available, I begin with a practical overview of specific types of schools that are philosophically alternative, delineating issues and features that they often use to describe themselves. Then, I move on to exploring the types of education embedded explicitly or implicitly within these schools.

Generally speaking, in terms of their commonalties, these alternatives are not hardened institutions with hardened rules or procedures. Avoiding many levels of school bureaucracies, these alternatives are flexible, caring learning communities where people come before procedures, rules, or technology.

These philosophical alternatives are not *ideal* learning communities; they are as susceptible to conflict as any other organization or school. Students disagree with teachers; teachers disagree with parents (and often with each other); parents disagree with school principals. They are often unique, however, in the way in which conflict is approached and resolved, along with the value that is found (and sometimes even welcomed) within each conflict.

Philosophical alternatives are rooted in philosophies about life and learning that are fundamentally different from mainstream schooling. While these philosophies differ in many specifics, what they have in common is that they tend to **not** be rooted in an overly objective or solely rational way of knowing that causes conventional schooling to divide learning into isolated components.

Many alternative educators argue instead that who the learners are, what they know, how they know it, and how they act in the world are not separate elements, but reflect the interdependencies between our world and our selves. As author Parker Palmer explains, "The images of self and world that are found at the heart of our knowledge will also be found in the values by which we live our lives" (Palmer, 1983, p. 21). Taking this a step further, Palmer describes the teacher as the mediator between the knower and the known, the "living link in the epistemology chain," teaching a way of being in the world, a mode of relationship (Palmer, 1983, p. 29). Human development, then, is part and parcel with education, and includes the emotional, ecological, spiritual, physical, social, and intellectual aspects of living.

Another quality that distinguishes these alternatives from traditional schools is their long and unique history within well-rooted philosophical foundations. As educational historian Ron Miller explains:

> Throughout the 200-year history of public schooling, a widely scattered group of critics have pointed out that the education of young human beings should involve much more than simply molding them into future workers or citizens. The Swiss humanitarian Johann Pestalozzi, the American Transcendentalists: Thoreau, Emerson, and Alcott, the founders of "progressive" education -- Francis Parker

> and John Dewey -- and pioneers such as Maria Montessori and Rudolf Steiner, among others, all insisted that education should be understood as the art of cultivating the moral, emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions of the developing child. (Miller, R., 1999, web page)

More recently though in a somewhat different vain, social critics such as John Holt, Paul Goodman, Ivan Illich, and Paulo Freire have examined education from anarchist-leaning perspectives, that is, critiques of the ways that conventional schooling subverts democracy by molding young people's understandings.[4]

A third quality that distinguishes alternatives from traditional education is their diversity. Unlike traditional private and public schools which are remarkably similar across time and space, most alternative schools do not subscribe to the "one model fits all" mentality. Each alternative creates and maintains its own methods and approaches to learning and teaching. This is a critical point that is often missed by newcomers (including myself). When initially learning about Montessori, Waldorf, or democratic schools, the overwhelming attitude of parents and teachers is often: "Oh, yes! Finally, education that pays attention to the unique needs of each child!" Once this excitement wears off, however, one may realize that there are many ways of conceiving and understanding the needs of the whole child in balance with the needs of the community and society at large.

Thus, each alternative approach is founded upon slightly, and sometimes drastically, different beliefs about what it means to live, learn, love, and grow in today's society. (For examples of philosophically diverse schools, visit the member web sites of schools and organizations in the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools, www.ncacs.org/links.htm).

Unfortunately, by uncritically hailing John Taylor Gatto, A.S. Neill, Rudolf Steiner, Daniel Greenberg, or Maria Montessori, parents as well as educators may create other systems that are as dogmatic and rigid as the system they were leaving. A particular alternative education system may appear on the surface to be "the answer," but at another level, it is still just a system. To create alternatives that are truly nurturing for children and integrated with communities, we must be conscious of the values, philosophies, and beliefs behind the systems and within ourselves. Then, rather than defending one alternative as "the answer," we can open to the idea that there is no "one best system" -- just a diversity of systems that match, or do not match, with the diversity of people in the world. Further, such awareness can also enable us to change our educational systems in more conscious ways that are aligned with how we ourselves are changing. This in turn helps keep us from getting stuck in a stagnated perception of what

education "should" look like.

When looking for qualities that distinguish educational alternatives from each other, one could certainly identify the curricula taught within schools. Across educational alternatives, we find that traditional subjects such as reading, writing, and math are not always taught separately but integrated into students' overall learning[5]. Other subjects like environmental education, ecology, or spirituality, which are often not found in more traditional school curricula, emerge from the interests of learners and teachers in a more open-ended learning community[6]. Yet, for the most part, subject matters are only indirectly related to the core philosophies and educational approaches used in many alternative schools. In the end, what is studied matters far less than how it is learned and how it becomes relevant in students' lives.[7]

Another important overall point that I've noticed less in the literature and more from speaking with people is that often these approaches will vary considerably within a single type of alternative from one cultural setting to another. For example, the Sudbury school near Chicago was quite different from the Sudbury school that I visited in Seattle (see section that follows for a brief description of this democratic model school). Or, I have a colleague who taught for many years at a Krishnamurti school in England who claims that their approach to education might be considered quite distinct from the Krishnamurti schools in India.

Finally, the size of most alternative schools seems to vary in the range from about 10 to 400 students, with the many of the longer-lasting alternatives seeming to maintain a population of 30 to 100 students. These numbers match with considerable research on small schools (see www.ael.org/eric/small.htm) that indicates many advantages of maintaining small schools, regardless of philosophy. In addition, many person-centered alternatives maintain a staff:student ratio that is far better than average.

Types of Schools (and homeschooling)

Increasingly, people hear about Waldorf schools and Montessori preschools in the United States, and many people have known for years about Quaker schools as well. Often, though, people who might find several educational approaches attractive have only learned about a single type of school, remaining unaware of the diversity of choices available. In addition, it often seems that educators fail to read much literature on schools outside of their own "type." It is as if there is an assumption that what other types of schools are doing is somehow too different from teachers' own goals and interests, and it takes too much time to read about other kinds of education when such education presumably does not directly address the primary concerns of one's own school or

schooling options. In fact, I would argue that the similarities between many person-centered alternatives and the ideal that many public school teachers dream about are important. Some of the fundamental roots for allowing educators, parents, and researchers to learn for ourselves more about the nature of "significant learning," I believe can come from seeing commonalties within the diversity of schools that call themselves learner-centered, progressive, and holistic.

The descriptions that follow illustrate eight types of educational alternatives, along with resources and links for more information. The summary for each type of school does not necessarily reflect any one school within that category. With some exceptions (such as Waldorf, Montessori, and Sudbury-model schools), most philosophical alternatives tend toward less rigidity in how each school creates itself from the dynamics of the local community and the values, beliefs, and experiences of current members.

Democratic and Free Schools

Many educators have heard of Summerhill, the radical "free school" in England, founded by A.S. Neill in 1921[8]. Fewer people know about the many other schools that have developed similar approaches on their own, or modified Neill's premises to fit their own needs and community. From Play Mountain Place in Los Angeles to the Albany Free School to the Children's Village School in Thailand, *free schools* have not withered away but continue to flourish with records of their long-term successes[9]. Their primary purpose is to create a safe environment where children can learn *freely*, that is without the use of force or coercion, drawing on children's curiosity to lead their own learning.

Many *free schools* are structured in ways that often lead them to be *democratic schools* as well, where staff as well as students have an equal vote. Some schools allow votes on all matters, including financial, conflict resolution, staffing, and minor administrative decisions. Other schools divide into committees, or sometimes the director maintains powers to make some administrative decisions. Voting in democratic schools is usually done in weekly all-school meetings. At the Albany Free School, whenever a child or adult feels their rights have been infringed upon by another, they may call an all-school meeting at any time to resolve the conflict immediately. The leader of an all-school meeting is generally elected at each meeting and is usually a student rather than an adult. Rules and procedures agreed upon by the whole community via a democratic vote have a tendency to be honored by community members young and old, with everyone understanding the procedures necessary for overturning a decision.

The role of the children is to learn, with the expectation that they will follow their own interests. In addition, students are expected to serve as responsible community members,

following the rules of the community or facing the consequences. The role of teachers and parents varies from school to school. In some schools, teachers offer classes for students who wish to take them; in other schools, teachers are cautious even about teaching until the students request a lesson.

Like Summerhill, the Sudbury Valley School (SVS) believes that parents tend toward the unnecessary use of authority and external compulsion to educate children which Sudbury tries to avoid[10]. Thus the SVS school community is primarily the students and staff; however, other schools modeling themselves after SVS are so small that parents often serve as staff to get the schools started. In contrast, at Play Mountain Place (PMP), the role of the parents has been significant from the get-go in the 1950s because the PMP philosophy considers everyone to be a teacher and so they strive to involve parents in the daily activities of the school. For more information about PMP and other free schools, visit the *Paths of Learning* archives at: www.PathsOfLearning.net/archives/freeschools2000.htm.

Folk Education

Folk education is "learning that happens when individuals and communities come together to celebrate culture and life in order to critically analyze challenging and especially oppressive situations, to build a knowledge base to apply that knowledge to create alternative possibilities for the institutions in which we live and work" (as quoted from the Folk and People's Education Association of America web site, www.peopleseducation.org).

Folk education is a grassroots movement whose history began in Scandinavia in the 1800s. Unlike other alternatives described in this paper, which are mostly for youth and K-12 education, folk education is more concerned with the political empowerment of adults. As we move into the new millennium adults might be more familiar with folk education through experiences with voluntary simplicity, eco-teams, or other informal grassroots movements.

Within academia, this type of learning is sometimes called "*radical adult education*" as it aims to get at the roots of education for social change. In its profile of the original folk high schools, the Informal Education Homepage states:

> Danish Folk High Schools first opened in 1844 (the year the YMCA was founded). The key figure was N.F.S. Grundtvig who planned a network of self-governing residential institutions that...would provide a place `where the peasant and the citizen can obtain knowledge and guidance for use and pleasure not so much in regard to his livelihood but in regard to his situation as . . . a citizen' (quoted in Moller and Watson 1944: 27). (Smith, 1996)

In 1925, over 300,000 young Danes attended folk schools, which were free of

government control, a place having nothing to do with grades, tests, or even diplomas, but having everything to do with emotionally-charged issues directly relevant to the lives of the participants. The American social activist Myles Horton[11], who visited these Danish folk schools in 1931, found that the most successful folk schools dealt as much with feelings and will as with memory and logic (Adams, 1975).

Also called *people's education*, this movement aims to provide education that is of, for, and by the people. Its power is such that governments or companies in political power tend not to like it, as it stirs people to think and act in ways that disturb the status quo. Educational activist Paulo Freire[12] was exiled from Brazil from 1964 to 1979 for teaching his fellow citizens to read in ways that also made them more aware of their own disenfranchisement.

Today the movement of folk education in the United States is facilitated by the Folk and People's Education Association of America. Through its newsletter and quarterly journal as well as its annual conference, the FPEAA supports radical adult education in many forms from simplicity circles to participatory action research to other grassroots groups in cultural work, environmental work, economic work, and community leadership.[13]

It is my hope that adults experiencing various forms of folk education can begin to see the meaningful connections between being and action, learning and doing, and other less traditional ways of thinking about education. As people understand these connections through their own experiences, the ground is laid for philosophical shifts within education across all ages.

Friends (Quaker) Schools

Quakers (members of the Religious Society of Friends) have contributed to social and educational reform in American culture since the seventeenth century. Friends schools are distinct from many other religious alternatives in the extent of their person-centered practices. Known for their academic rigor, Friends schools also pride themselves on the development of a caring community within and beyond the walls of the school.

Examining the missions of schools in the Friends Council on Education (http://mathforum.com/fce/), several themes stand out. The goals tend not to distinguish the end of education from the process of learning. Both the purpose and process of education involves treating each person with dignity and respect, and understanding that different people learn in different ways. They sometimes describe the goal of self-direction as helping students to "uncover their own leadings." Personal and individual responsibility within the

community are essential for success. In addition, life-long learning, social justice, and challenging human oppression are often supplementary goals of the Friends schools. At the global level, Quakers like to think of it as "creating the world that ought to be." Many Friends schools emphasize "simplicity, honesty, the peaceful resolution of conflict, the dignity of physical labor, mutual trust and respect, and care for each other and the earth" (from The Meeting School web site, http://www.mv.com/ipusers/tms/).

Quaker schools tend to be organized in somewhat traditional ways, within classrooms where teachers tend to use traditional methods to facilitate discussions around common academic subjects. They often use grades and grade levels for student advancement as well. Their use of meetings, silence, queries, and conflict resolution techniques are the primary approaches by which they enliven their educational goals and philosophies. These processes give a more heartfelt flavor to decision-making within the schools. For conflict resolution, they engage in "clearness committees." Author Parker Palmer describes these committees as "a communal approach to discernment" that is designed to protect "individual identity and integrity while drawing on the wisdom of other people" (Palmer, 2000). In addition, you can find a useful listing of Peace and Conflict Resolution Education Bibliography for different age groups posted in the FCE web site.

The student's role in Quaker schools is to serve as responsible learner and community member. Among other characteristics, the teacher's role is "To make daily space for the inward journey of every student." For a brief list of 16 characteristics of teachers identified by the FCE, visit FCE web site, and click on "Best Practices." Parents are not mentioned much in the Quakers' online educational literature and a number of Quaker schools in the U.S. are residential which limits the involvement of parents in many ways. Nonetheless, Amy Cooke, director of John Woolman School, describes parents as "partners and allies" with the school.

Homeschooling, Unschooling, and Deschooling

As perhaps the largest alternative school movement in the 1990s, from 1994 to 1996, the numbers of homeschoolers may have grown from an estimated 0.8 to 1.4% of the K-12 student population in the United States. While these figures are estimates, it is quite certain that between 345,000 to 636,000 children ages 6 to 17 participated in home education during those years.[14]

The goals of homeschooling vary as widely as the goals and purposes of schools around the world. Like other educational alternatives, homeschooling expands well beyond traditional modes of teaching and learning as well. Of particular interest for parents thinking

outside the mainstream approaches are the movements of "unschooling" and "de-schooling" within home education. (It should also be noted that homeschooling approaches also exist in affiliation with Montessori, Waldorf, and many other educational philosophies.)

Unschooling is a form of homeschooling that was popularized by educator and author John Holt in the 1970s. Today, the unschooling philosophy is perhaps best expressed in popular books by Grace Llewellyn and Linda Dobson[15]. In 1997, Llewellyn's *Teenage Liberation Handbook: How to Quit School & Get a Real Life and Education* was published as a practical guide for teenagers (and parents) who were fed up with traditional learning where students remained hidden inside classrooms and text books. Her purpose was to illustrate the means and resources for learning through the community and personal experiences (apprenticeships, etc.). She showed how homeschooling could be a fulfilling use of time while also providing the necessary social interactions far and beyond what is available in most traditional schools.

A complementary trend in homeschooling, called *deschooling*, began with the publication of Ivan Illich's famous book, *Deschooling Society (1971)*. A recent book on the topic edited by Matt Hern entitled *Deschooling Our Lives* provides practical examples "about people, individuals, families, and communities taking control of the direction and shape of their lives . . . and homelearning as a fundamentally cooperative social project" (Hern, 1996). In the book's foreword, Ivan Illich writes:

> If people are seriously to think about deschooling lives, and not just escape from the corrosive effects of compulsory schooling, they could do no better than to develop the habit of setting a mental question mark beside all discourse on young people's "educational needs" or "learning needs," or about their need for a "preparation for life." I would like them to reflect on the historicity of these very ideas. Such reflection would take the new crop of deschoolers a step further from where the younger and somewhat naïve Ivan was situated, back when talk of "deschooling" was born. (Hern, 1996, pp. ix-x)

Often when progressive-thinking parents hear about such homeschooling trends, the gut reaction is that it is a good idea—in theory. Yet, the fears of "what if?" often lead parents to use less learner-centered methods of educating their own children. For more evidence and "fear-relieving" facts and stories about how unschooling really works, Holt Associates' "Q & A on Homeschooling" (www.holtgws.com/QA.htm) is a good place to start, along with other works by John Holt. To locate national and local networks of unschoolers, try www.unschooling.org (*The Family Unschoolers Network*), as well as www.unschooling.com (sponsored by *Home Education Magazine*). In addition, Karl Bunday's *School is Dead; Learn*

in Freedom web site (http://learninfreedom.org/) provides evidence on how students can and do learn on their own with great success and with greater freedoms than ever. Bunday also shows that despite this nontraditional approach, homeschoolers are admitted into many highly selective colleges.

Krishnamurti Schools

How do we move beyond our own conditioning? How do we create schools for the young that do not instill in them our own fears and prejudices? According to Jiddu Krishnamurti, we must create an education that is not a "system" but is built around the attitudes and qualities of the teacher and child and how they relate to one another.

What exactly constitutes a Krishnamurti School? What are the intentions and aims of these schools? These questions, along with important implications about the roles of teachers, were addressed by Krishnamurti in 1984 in a statement made at a school in Ojai, California, based on his teachings:

> It is becoming more and more important in a world that is destructive and degenerating that there should be a place, an oasis, where one can learn a way of living that is whole, sane and intelligent. Education in the modern world has been concerned with the cultivation not of intelligence, but of intellect, of memory and its skills. In this process little occurs beyond passing information from the teacher to the taught, the leader to the follower, bringing about a superficial and mechanical way of life. In this there is little human relationship.
>
> Surely a school is a place where one learns about the totality, the wholeness of life. Academic excellence is absolutely necessary, but a school includes much more than that. It is a place where both the teacher and the taught explore not only the outer world, the world of knowledge, but also their own thinking, their own behaviour. From this they begin to discover their own conditioning and how it distorts their thinking. This conditioning is the self to which such tremendous and cruel importance is given. Freedom from conditioning and its misery begins with this awareness. It is only in such freedom that true learning can take place. In this school it is the responsibility of the teacher to sustain with the student a careful exploration into the implications of conditioning and thus end it.
>
> A school is a place where one learns the importance of knowledge and its limitations. It is a place where one learns to observe the world not from any particular point of view or conclusion. One learns to look at the whole of man's endeavour, his search for beauty, his search for truth and for a way of living without conflict. Conflict is the very essence of violence. So far education has not been concerned with this, but in this school our intent is to understand actuality and its action without any preconceived ideals, theories or beliefs which bring about a contradictory attitude toward existence. (Krishnamurti, 1981)

Structurally each Krishnamurti school is each quite unique as each endeavors to

evolve from a "methodless" or "pathless" approach[16]. Some have evolved with an academic focus, others with a spiritual emphasis, and others with a more psychological foundation for student development. More information about specific schools, foundations, or educational centers inspired by Krishnamurti can be found on the Krishnamurti Information Network's Community web pages: http://www.kinfonet.org/Community/.

Montessori Schools

These schools are in principle based on methodologies developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, the first woman to become a medical doctor in Italy and one of the most respected pioneers in education as well. As Ron Miller explains, "Montessori's central concern was the natural development of the child, the healthy formation of the physical, mental, and spiritual qualities that are latent in the human being and which unfold, she believed, according to a purposeful, even divine, life force (for which she used the word *horme*) . . . Given the proper nurturing environment, *horme* impels the child to unfold his or her potential personality, to expand his powers, assert his independence, and create an adult identity" (Miller, R., 1997, p. 160).

Montessori's own work focused around research through direct observations of young children. Thus, the strength of the Montessori method is working with the developmental needs of young children. As of 1997, there were over 3,000 Montessori schools in the United States. These are primarily private schools, but some are public; as school choice expands, more and more Montessori charter schools will likely appear as well.

The American Montessori Society states that "The aim of Montessori education is to foster competent, responsible, adaptive citizens who are lifelong learners and problem solvers" (*AMS POSITION STATEMENT KEY CONCEPTS AND PRACTICES*).

The student's role in a Montessori school is to engage in experiences and activities designed to foster physical, intellectual, creative and social independence. The teacher's role is to develop curricula and learning environments that are age-appropriate and aligned with the Montessori philosophy and methodology. Families are consider partners with the schools, an integral part of each child's total development.

For more details on the philosophies and structures of Montessori schools, consult any of these large and growing organizations:

- International Montessori Society, http://www.wdn.com/trust/ims/
- American Montessori Society, http://www.amshq.org/

- North American Montessori Teachers' Association, http://www.montessori-namta.org/

Open Schools (and Classrooms)

The Open Classroom: A Practical Guide to a New Way of Teaching by author and New York City teacher Herb Kohl (1969) defined a radical alternative that came to be used even in public schools in the 1970s. This book was a direct response to working in an authoritative school environment that was more about controlling students than teaching them. Kohl describes the struggles, problems, failures, and successes of teachers trying to create non-authoritarian classrooms amidst the "battles with self and system" that teachers encounter in public schools (Kohl, 1969, p. 15). The Coalition of Essential Schools continues the legacy of open classrooms:

> In theory, the open classrooms were designed based on student participation rather than compulsion; they were intended to validate and honor students' sincere desires to learn. In practice, the patience needed to make such a school or classroom work effectively often exceeded what most school districts were willing to endure. Many teachers now look back on open classrooms as merely another fad of the seventies. However, today many of the over 1,000 members of Coalition of Essential Schools continue to focus on such progressive ideals and the use of non-authoritarian practices originally exemplified by open classrooms. Essential School principles emphasize the "values of unanxious expectation (``I won't threaten you but I expect much of you"), of trust (until abused) and of decency (the values of fairness, generosity and tolerance)" (from www.essentialschools.org/aboutus/phil/10cps.html).

Several *open schools* now have long and well-documented track records, including the Mankato Wilson Campus School, Mountain Open School (now the Jefferson County Open School), and St. Paul Open School[17]. In describing the early days of one school, educational researcher Robert Skenes writes:

> The St. Paul Open School pioneered student-centered, community-based learning in the public school arena. With no bells, no grade levels, no course grades or credits, the Open School demonstrated that students could successfully learn through making choices and pursuing their interests with the help of supportive, facilitative adults both within the community of the school and in the broader community beyond the school's walls. At the time of this "snapshot," there were over 1,000 students on the waiting list to get into the school. (Skenes, 2000, p. 53)

One of the best resources documenting the successful practices of open classrooms, open schools, and related humanistic endeavors in public education is Dorothy Fadiman's video "Why Do These Kids Love School?" (1990). This video profiles eight progressive public schools in the

United States with high standards that are "met through mutual trust" within each school community. The three features shared by the profiled schools are: (1) innovative curricula, with teachers free to be creative, (2) non-competitive environments, and (3) shared responsibility for the school amongst all school members -- students, teachers, and administrators.

Waldorf (or Steiner) Schools

Finally, we come to the growing phenomenon of the spiritually-based Waldorf education. Waldorf schools are based on the "anthroposophical" (human wisdom) teachings of Rudolf Steiner in the early 20th century. This approach aims to educate children to "become free, responsible, and active human beings, able to create a just and peaceful society"(Koetzsch, 1997, p. 216). Waldorf educators consider themselves to be "child-centered" because one of their hallmarks is focusing on the needs of the whole child. Paradoxically, however, in an important sense they are teacher-centered as they are clearly led by teachers. Waldorf teachers aim to help children in learning the life rhythms for creating an inner balance which helps prepare them for creating lives of outward balance.

Structurally, Waldorf schools are similar in some ways to Montessori schools. Both tend to be private schools, with some trials as public charters as well. Both are mostly small schools for younger students, with a focus on the developmental needs of students. However, the core philosophies are quite different. Maria Montessori did significant research into natural learning and the unfolding needs of the whole child. In contrast, although Rudolf Steiner founded the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1919, overall he was more involved with the development of his own spiritual philosophy of human wisdom than with researching education or children. Nonetheless, his approach has a number of holistic elements that appeal to many parents as well as teachers. Steiner schools focus on integrating the inner rhythms of nature and child through music, art, and dance.

Also, it is worth noting that both Montessori and Waldorf schools have their own special teacher credentialling programs. Further, both types of education have rarely been studied by outside educators or researchers who are not already committed to the school philosophies and structures[18].

Summary Remarks on Types of Schools

This summary of eight types of schools was written to show teachers and researchers the breadth of educational alternatives as they now exist, to illustrate that when we speak of "alternatives," it is not one or two small trends, but a growing plethora of person-centered approaches to education, expressed in a diversity of ways. It should also be pointed out that these summaries were provided as small "samples" into a diverse array of educational stories told by over 500 resources in the Paths of Learning Resource Center, representing many hundreds of schools, programs, and projects. Other types of schools and educational approaches such as the Reggio Emelia approach to early childhood education (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998), the emerging Enki Education, or many ancient native traditions, would fit squarely into these examples as well.

For a more complete summary and discussion of these and other types of alternatives, I recommend Ronald Koetzsch's book, *The Parents' Guide to Alternatives in Education* (1997, Shambhala Press). In addition, the Informal Education Homepage(www.infed.org/) is an excellent source for historic descriptions of core educational philosophers and activists who are associated with these alternatives, including Paulo Freire, Carl Rogers, J. Krishnamurti, Maria Montessori, John Dewey, and many others.

Frameworks for Education: Maps for Understanding the Territories of Alternatives

In beginning to examine this wide variety of philosophical alternatives, I've also given much consideration to frameworks for understanding the philosophical connections and differences among these alternatives. For researchers studying a diversity of schools "outside the mainstream," frameworks are necessary for knowing what issues within teaching or learning to give attention for developing a more insightful inquiry about the nature of teaching and learning, and the elements of practice that seem to facilitate meaningful learning. Clearly, when the goals for education shift, this needs to refocus the structures and issues about which we are asking research questions.

There are many ways to categorize and contemplate various types of education: holistic, progressive, humanistic, libertarian, emancipatory or popular, constructivist, and the list goes on. The two schemas summarized in this section present frameworks which I have found most useful for thinking about education that goes beyond the traditional achievement-focused schools. First is an "orientation" framework that allows us to see the relative differences among varying types of education, and second is a more sociological framework that allows us to examine Holistic

Education by its own merits.

While these frameworks may ring familiar to many holistic educators who have begun to examine this field, for teachers and school directors who are on the front lines of developing their own unique practices, there appears to be a continual (and healthy) grappling with how to reflect and talk about what they do. Further, there is currently little research being done in the field of Holistic Education in particular, and my review of the literature indicates that this may be due in part to the lack of a cohesive yet encompassing framework for identifying what questions to ask about the field. Across the past few centuries, hundreds of educational alternatives have emerged, and teachers often know when they are facilitating a level and quality of learning that is quite different from "the norm," but relatively few researchers have yet examined closely these unique approaches to education. Or, when they are examined, it is done from within the narrow framework of a single type of school, that allows for limited transferability of research results, or within a framework more suited to questions about traditional education.

Four Orientations of Education

Examining education from a perspective of wholes within wholes (Wilber, 1995), one type of education does not have to foreclose another. Building on the work of John P. Miller (1996), educational historian Ron Miller identifies four distinct orientations of education that have emerged in the past century: transmission, transaction, transformation, and self-direction (Miller, R., 2000b, pp. 201-205).

The "**transmission**" orientation asserts that the world is made of individual pieces, and thus curriculum can be divided into separate units. Education is the process of teachers transmitting knowledge, beliefs, values that are accepted by society. Students are the recipients of information, and learning is the process of memorizing information or acquiring skills. This orientation is especially associated with the "back to basics" movement as well as with E.D. Hirsch's popular books on cultural literacy. Ron Miller explains the benefits and dangers of this orientation of education:

> Families or communities with strongly held religious or cultural beliefs who want to ensure that their children adopt these beliefs also tend to favor transmission approaches. Indeed, any educator or parent may find certain situations in which the transmission of specific knowledge is an appropriate strategy, and some children do appear to learn better from direct, carefully planned instruction. But most schooling in the modern age is heavily influenced by this understanding of education, to the point where it has become authoritarian and rigid. Today, government officials, along with leaders of corporations, foundations, universities, and other institutions, determine what all students "need" to know, and this becomes educational policy, expressed in standards, state-mandated textbooks, high stakes testing, and relentless

control over teaching and learning. (Miller, R., 2000b, pp. 202-203)

The "**transaction**" orientation asserts that the world is made of ever-changing pieces, "an ongoing stream where everything is in a state of flux"(Miller, J., 1996, p. 14). Education is the process of experimental problem solving, in which teachers help students learn the scientific method through application. Whereas the teachers were seen as the authority in the transmission approach, in this approach they are guides who encourage students in dialoguing, questioning, and engaging in thoughtful reflection. Students are viewed as inquisitive critical thinkers and problem-solvers. This pragmatic orientation is especially associated with John Dewey and the progressive education movement. Many philosophical alternatives fall within this orientation. This orientation also encompasses some of the progressive reforms and school change movements in mainstream education as well.

A third orientation identified by Ron Miller is that of **self-direction**. This orientation assumes a basic trust in human nature and a worldview that is perhaps most like the transactional orientation. (John Miller includes such approaches within the transaction orientation.) Ron Miller qualitatively differentiates self-direction from the transactional perspective because unlike the others, it is concerned with learning as such, and often repudiates education as a distinct profession. In fact, advocates of self-direction are noted for doing away with most structures of schooling such as grades, lesson plans, age groupings, and teaching strategies. Teachers serve as neither guides nor facilitators (unless requested by youth); teachers are primarily resource persons. Students are responsible for both initiating and for directing their own education. Unlike the holistic or transformative orientation there is no emphasis on the spiritual development of the child or teacher. Authors and educators most associated with self-direction are John Holt and A.S. Neill. The alternatives most associated with this orientation include free schools as well as unschooling.

The "**transformation**" orientation asserts that the world is not made of pieces at all, but of interactive and interdependent wholes within wholes. It further asserts that we are all evolving and that there is a cosmic source to our existence (which David Bohm calls the *implicate order*; others call it God or the Tao). Both John Miller and Ron Miller describe this orientation as supporting "holistic education." As Ron Miller writes in his recent book *Caring for New Life: Essays on Holistic Education*:

> Holism cannot be pinned down precisely, because by its very nature it embraces paradox, mystery, and outright contradiction. . . . Meaning emerges in context, in experience; holistic education is therefore essentially a responsiveness to the wholeness of experience as we live it in particular times and places. (Miller, R., 2000a, p. 4)

Some of the authors whom both Millers identify within this orientation include Krishnamurti, Maria Montessori, Rudolf Steiner, and Joseph Chilton Pearce, as well as philosophers such as Emerson and Whitehead. Other philosophers such as Ken Wilber and Aldous Huxley are also frequently referenced within this orientation of education, particularly noted for their claims of a universal evolution and "perennial philosophy" of humankind that seems to cut across cultures, religions, and political orientations.

Within the four orientations outlined above, authors and researchers have a tendency to be drawn one or another orientation, for a variety of social, cultural, and political reasons. According to Ron Miller (1997), there have been five primary and interrelated trends that have influenced American culture and the evolution of schools towards the transmission orientation that we now know as "mainstream." These trends have included: the Puritan theology and Protestant ethic, scientific reductionism, restrained democratic ideology (and tensions between conservative republicans and liberal democrats), beliefs inherent in capitalism, and the nationalism that is now more prevalent than ever in post-9-11 America. Movements toward the three other orientations may in some ways be reactions against the predominance of these cultural trends, thus causing schools that support such orientations to seem similar in many ways. Yet, each non-transactional orientation has its own unique history, philosophy, and motivations that draw people toward it.

A Framework for EnCompassing Holistic Education

Having now explored these four orientations and their various expressions within schools, I find myself drawn toward the fourth and most encompassing orientation, the home for Holistic Education. This may be rooted in my own biased interest in self-development as an often-overlooked element that seems critical to social change. For reaching a point of inquiry into Holistic Education, it may be useful for some (like myself) to have traveled through experiences and understandings of the various types of schools and education mentioned in this paper. This intellectual journey demonstrates the ever-widening circles (or "holons") for approaching education. Many teachers may also come to an intuitive understanding of Holistic Education through their direct experiences with students in traditional schools. In whatever way the interest in Holistic Education becomes engaged, once an inquiry begins into the wholeness of learning, there emerges an ongoing dilemma of how to talk about, much less research, such an encompassing orientation to education.

Recently, Scott Forbes completed a detailed analysis of the sociological and

philosophical precedents of holistic education (1999). Forbes's work is important especially to the field of research because it gives grounding for a general study of Holistic Education based on its own merits. Thus, rather than looking at Holistic Education as a comparison to other types of education, we can begin to see it in its own light. Also, instead of looking at solitary and unique expressions of holistic education as seen in various types of schools, we can begin to see how different schools fit more or less within the broader framework of Holistic Education at large. Just as Dewey delineated the field of "progressive education" for closer study and examination, I believe that Forbes has started on the path for developing a rigorous framework for better understanding Holistic Education, while leaving ample space for its many individual expressions.

Forbes analyzed six primary authors whose writings form underlying principles that have inspired most holistic schools and holistic approaches to teaching: Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Jung, Maslow, and Rogers. These authors all indicated that students can learn but they are not taught per se. Instead, a teacher facilitates the needed learning by providing students with opportunities for developing wisdom or "real knowledge." Students themselves have the agency and inherent motivation for learning.

For any approach to education, perhaps the three most basic questions to be asked are: What is the goal of education? What needs to be learned? And what facilitates the needed learning? Forbes addresses these questions by looking at the commonalties of how the historic authors, across time and cultures, would likely have answered these questions. In the process of doing so, he realized that some new terms needed to be put into use so that we can better discuss concepts that are often talked about yet seldom named. One of these concepts, pertaining to the goal of education, he borrowed the word "Ultimacy" from Paul Tillich. While I can not do justice to the depth and precision of Forbes' writing on Ultimacy, the essence is that holistic educators share the common goal (which is interconnected as both an end state and a process) of being the most that a human can be. This has been described in varying ways from both psychological as well as religious perspectives, such as atman, undus mundus, natural man, self-actualization, peak experiences, or elevating human nature to its highest, its noblest.

Addressing the question of "What needs to be learned (in holistic education)?" Forbes examined experiential knowledge as the source for that which makes Ultimacy possible. He identified five core elements of "sagacious competence" that were commonly referenced across "the Authors" examined. These included: (1) Capacity of having good judgment, (2) Ability to be free (psychological, not political freedom), (3) Ability to discover and refine values, (4) Meta-learning, and (5) Social-ability (not social skills). He used these issues as the basis for then examining what the Authors had in common in terms of "what facilitates the needed learning."

What is unique about Forbes's analysis is that not only did he delineate the field of Holistic Education based on its historic and intellectual precedents, but then he went on to develop a more complete sociological understanding of it, expanding on the work of Basil Bernstein. Using Bernstein's model for competence-based pedagogy, Forbes added two elements of social logic so that Holistic Education could be considered as a fourth mode of competence-based pedagogy. Looking at competence-based pedagogy (which would include most philosophical alternatives in education), Bernstein identified five areas of social logic that make it unique:

1. Universal democracy of acquisition
2. Students active and creative in constructing meaning
3. Self-regulation; meaning structures need no shaping
4. Skeptical of hierarchical relationships
5. Shift in time perspective

After careful study of Bernstein and Holistic Education, Forbes identified two additional aspects of social logic that would be necessary to distinguish Holistic Education from the other competence-based approaches to pedagogy:

6. Being gives doing its context.
7. Everyone engages in learning (not just the students).

Of course, one must review Forbes's work directly for a full appreciation of the meanings embedded in this sociological framework. My primary point in summarizing the work here is to suggest it as one of the only complete frameworks that I have yet seen that would allow holistic education researchers to inquire systematically into educational alternatives, across and within the varying types of schools presented in this paper.

Crisscrossing Frameworks

Any type of alternative school, such as those described in this paper, may use one or more curricular foci, may use an assortment of methodologies, and may have more or less holistic elements within their formal and informal interactions. The transaction oriented (or progressive) schools are most likely to focus on content as an integral and significant part of how a school is structured. In contrast, the transformation (or holistic) schools may well have rigorous academics within the school, but the academics are not generally the focal point for how the school day or

year are structured. For self-direction, whether or not academics are studied depends on the self-assessed needs of the learner. Of course, no clear boundaries exist between these orientations; many schools as well as homeschooling families are in the process of deciding for themselves an orientation that best matches their beliefs about freedom, structure, and learning. Educational orientation is an on-going dialogue that emerges as adults and students observe and reflect on their own experiences.

For those who are interested in researching progressive, self-directed, or holistic approaches to education, there are clearly many overlapping features, elements, or social logic that define their structures and goals. Unfortunately, due to overlap, the distinctions often go unrecognized. As a result, I've seen teachers within these fields talk about issues such as methodology, learning, or social justice, believing that they are speaking about the same thing when in fact they are not. Often, all that they really have in common is that they are interested in some kind of meaningful learning for students, and they are NOT talking about traditional (or transmission) approaches to these matters.

Based on my exploratory analysis of resources about educational alternatives, I have developed a chart for helping identify patterns and core issues that distinguish the three non-transmission types of education. Most schools and approaches to education crisscross these three orientations; few fall solidly within any single orientation. However, it is useful to see the distinctions, so as to take care when studying or working within schools to see that what you are doing may not be at all the same as what is being done in other educational alternatives, even though some of the teaching methodologies and performance outcomes may have similarities.

Core Distinctions Among Orientations of Competency-Based Education

	Competency Based Education[1], three "Orientations"[2]		
Distinguishing Qualities	**Transaction (Progressive)**	**Self-Directed (Learner-centered)**	**Transformation (Holistic)**
Learner Characteristics	Competence ("procedures for engaging with, and constructing, the world") is inherent in all of us; no deficits, just differences, in learners.[3]		
Process of Learning: meaning-making	Interacting; constructing	Exploring; creating; constructing meaning	Co-constructing; finding inherent meaning
Meta-Learning	Habits developed by natural consequences	Self-regulation (through independence)	Self-regulation (through interdependence)
Structure of Social Relationships	Utilitarian (well-reasoned structures)	Egalitarian (through horizontal relationships)	Holarchical (natural hierarchies; see Ken Wilber)
Time Perspective	Past, ***Present***, Future	Present	Present
Guiding Principle for Action (or what type of learning activities are pursued?)	Reasoning (as defined by Dewey) gives action its purpose, which balances actions/passions, society and individual needs.	"Feeling," or pursuing one's own passions, appears to be a primary guide for what is learned.	"Being" gives doing its context (which includes reasoning, feeling, and transcendence, or essence that is unnamable).
Who Learns What?	Students about subjects; teachers about methods	Learners about life	Everyone about life and self-development.
The Goal	Democracy, social justice	(self-defined)	Ultimacy, the fully functioning human
Originating theorists and philosophers	John Dewey, Francis Parker (Freire, Horton, Gruntvig)	A.S. Neill, John Holt	Rousseau, Jung, Rogers, Maslow, Pestalozzi, Froebel
Associated schools	Open Schools, Quaker, Folk Education	Unschooling, Democratic and Free Schools	(some Montessori, Waldorf, Krishnamurti and Quaker)[4]
Current Authors	Alfie Kohn, Deborah Meier, etc.	John Taylor Gatto, Daniel Greenberg, etc.	Forbes, Kessler, Luvmour & Luvmour, Miller, Palmer, etc.

[1] The top seven "distinguishing qualities" were derived from a personal reformulation of core issues underlying distinctions by Basil Bernstein and expounded by Scott Forbes for competency-based pedagogy (Forbes, 1999).

[2] The three orientations examined were derived from descriptions and terms developed by authors John Miller and Ron Miller.

[3] Bernstein as quoted by Forbes (1999).

[4] These schools are set in parenthesis because they are arguably less holistic than many other independent schools that have not defined any particular approach to name what it is they do, and thus maintain more open systems.

A Word About School Choice Systems

Another related issue to educational alternatives that needs a bit of attention relates to school choice systems. A majority of states in the U.S.A. have legislated "charter schools" in the past decade, a system of school choice that ideally allows more kinds of schools to be created with a less rigid structure of accountability, for encouraging greater school autonomy[19]. In addition, vouchers continue to be a hot topic in political debates on educational reform. As parents exercise their choices within public as well as private settings, they are often confused about what all these choices really represent. People often ask me about charter schools as if they were a type of school. In fact, charter schools represent many types of schools. The charter status of a school relates only to how public education is governed at the macro level of politics, and not how the school approaches education. For example, some charter schools are Waldorf, others are back-to-basics, and many are specialty schools (such as schools focused on foreign languages, arts, or music).

Charter schools and vouchers are two types of "school choice" programs. (See the Center for Education Reform web site, www.edreform.com, as a primary source promoting both charters as well as vouchers.) While many alternative educators support school choice, there are nonetheless many dangers and pitfalls associated with this reform movement. For starters, "choice" does not necessarily lead to the development of what I would call "real" choice, that is schools which are significantly different in their fundamental philosophies of education (Martin, 2000).

Like enrolling in private schools, school choice programs often provide a smaller class size and more individualized methods of instruction, which can certainly benefit students. Still, it remains to be seen whether or not the school choice movement will have significant impact on the awareness of families for choosing more philosophically diverse schools.

For parents who take time to compare their choices, the tendency thus far is toward choosing more back-to-basics types of schools or specialty schools, many of which are just as traditional in their approaches to learning as the public schools. After analyzing a 1985 survey of 575 parents with students in 14 magnet schools in a county on the East Coast, Jeffrey Henig concluded:

> While parents are interested in special educational programs, their dominant concern seems to be whether the school does a good job in fulfilling the traditional functions that we associate with education: teaching basic skills and problem-solving in a safe and orderly environment. This desire for a generic kind of "good school," shared for the most part across ethnic groups, challenges those who favor a managed choice

approach to integration. (Henig, p. 112)

The factors that parents consider in choosing a school depend partly on the type of school choice program and the kinds of parents who are using it. For example, in selecting private schools, parents often look at the other kinds of families attending that school (their social status or religious affiliations). In other studies, it is found that parents consider location as a primary factor of selection. On the other hand, in Milwaukee's early targeted voucher program (targeted to low-income families) parents stated that their choices were based on such matters as educational quality, teaching approach and style, discipline in a chosen school, and atmosphere (Witte, 2000, p. 63). However, there is still limited research on the deciding factors in how parents choose schools, or how those selection criteria impact the students' success in schools.

Most "school choice" rhetoric focuses on several non-validated assumptions about systems for school choice. First, school choice advocates assume that opportunities for choice will mean more options, which has not yet been validated by research. Second, many advocates as well as parents continue to assume that there is "one best system" and that the guiding factor of choice would and should be academic excellence based on test scores and student performance. From her research of a St. Louis inner city transfer program, Amy Stuart Wells (Wells, 1996, p. 32) describes how parents choosing to transfer their children to new schools tend to accept the "achievement ideology" of the schools into which they are transferring. The emphasis on an academic performance model of education is further evidenced by the number of studies (all of them!) that focus almost exclusively on academic achievement as the sole factor for comparing the success of students enrolled in school choice programs. Third, choice advocates assume that school choices will level the playing field for disadvantaged students (from lower income families or traditionally disenfranchised populations), when in fact evidence shows that whether this is true depends a great deal on the details of how the choice program is designed and implemented (Fuller & Elmore, 1996, p. 195-199). In reality, many advocates for school choice programs are entrepreneurs and corporate leaders who have something to gain by creating a competitive market system for our schools that has the appearance of being more "democratic."

On the flip side of the coin, a choice system such as the one now in place in Milwaukee can be a great supporter of truly alternative schools. Many philosophical alternatives do not cater to upper-class families and so financially they often struggle to survive. Vouchers as well as charters are two means by which they can more easily serve students from a range of social classes, nationalities, and ethnic backgrounds. For example, in Maine if students live in small towns where there is no public school they are given vouchers to choose whatever private school

they wish in their area. When I visited Liberty School in Blue Hill, Maine, I found it thriving with over 60 students, a relatively well-paid staff and well-designed facilities. In contrast, schools of similar philosophies that I had visited in other states often struggle to attract even a dozen or so students. Plus, they often face the added problem of attracting a majority of students who come to their school only as a last resort (having practically dropped out of other schools) rather than those who would be attracted to the school because of its philosophical beliefs.

When weighing finances with philosophies, if students are not failing in the traditional schools, most parents believe the public schools are good enough and offer their children socializing experiences that they can't get in schools that are too small. Thus, alternatives find themselves in a bind and are sometimes willing to take the risk of a "few strings attached" in order to get the added financial benefits of public school choice programs.

Concluding Remarks

I began this paper by describing the problems with word usage in educational alternatives and then presented qualities for understanding the differences among and between educational alternatives. Next, I summarized the various types of alternative schools that many people hear about in passing or that perhaps they want to learn more about but are not sure where to begin. From these specific schools I stepped back to show more clearly the philosophical landscape into which such alternatives can be located by describing types of education. For holistic education, which I believe faces a most challenging task of framing its work in consistent yet encompassing ways that can be explained within the more dominant culture of education, I summarized a particular framework that might be especially useful for researchers in the field. Finally, I wrapped up by highlighting some recent political issues regarding school choice which may (or may not) impact the growth of the philosophical alternatives discussed in this paper.

In a society where issues of pluralism and diversity are valued as part of creating a more sustainable world and just democracy, the diversity of philosophical perspectives in education needs to be acknowledged. While I would not advocate the acknowledgement or integration of schools that are openly hostile towards other perspectives, the philosophical alternatives highlighted in this paper are those that embrace values (such as compassion and wholeness) that are almost universally accepted across religious and cultural viewpoints. At present, whether we look at higher education, education research, teacher education, K-12 public schools, educational media, or the culture at large, the gross lack of acknowledgement and inquiry into the kinds of

alternatives discussed in this paper constitutes what I see as discrimination against well-established philosophical alternatives in education. This discrimination hinders the development of human potential by limiting our explorations of how to facilitate meaningful learning and diverse expressions of core values such as creativity, courage, collaboration, and love.

My hope is that this paper has provided a framework for parents and teachers to better understand approaches to education within your own schools and communities, while providing researchers with greater insight into the appropriate frameworks and thus questions for initiating study into educational alternatives. Rather than continuing to reinforce "mainstream education" which reaches most of the population at arguably shallow levels of knowledge acquisition, I would like to see education research become part of the move to expand the "real choices" in education. For this to happen, parents, educators, and researchers must themselves become better educated about educational alternatives. Once it is understood that the purpose and means for educating is interconnected with what is learned, then the significance for diverse approaches to learning becomes critical for supporting human development in a pluralistic society.

References

Adams, F. (1975). *Unearthing Seeds of Fire*. Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair.

AMS POSITION STATEMENT KEY CONCEPTS AND PRACTICES. [Web document]. Available: http://www.AmericanMontessoriSociety.org/positions/index.html [2002, March 22].

Bernstein, B. (1996). *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity: Theory, Research, and Critique*. London: Taylor & Francis.

Chubb, J. E., & Moe, T. M. (1990). Politics, Markets, and America's Schools. Washington, DC: Brookings Institute.

Clark, E. T. (1997). *Designing and Implementing an Integrated Curriculum: A Student-Centered Approach*. Brandon, VT: Holistic Education Press.

Dhongchai, R., & Dhongchai, P. (1997). *Real Life at Moo Baan Dek: The Coming of Age of An Alternative Education Community*. Bangkok, Thailand: Foundation for Children Publishing House.

Edwards, C., Gandini, L., & Forman, G. (Eds.). (1998). *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach-Advanced Reflections* (Second ed.). Greenwich, CT: Ablex Publishing Corp.

Fadiman, D. (1990). *Why Do These Kids Love School?* Santa Monica, CA: Pryamid Film & Video.

Forbes, S. (1999). *Holistic Education: An Analysis of Its Intellectual Precedents and Nature*. Unpublished dissertation, University of Oxford: Green College. (A variation of this study

is being published in 2002 by the Foundation for Educational Renewal.)

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York, NY: Continuum Publishing Corp.

Fuller, B., & Elmore, R. (Eds.). (1996). *Who Chooses? Who Looses? Culture, Institutions, and the Unequal Effects of School Choice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Glines, D. (1995). *Creating Educational Futures: Continuous Mankato Wilson Alternatives*. San Diego, CA: National Association for Year-Round Education.

Greenberg, D. (1987). *Free at Last: The Sudbury Valley School*. Framingham, MA: Sudbury Valley School Press.

Greenberg, D., & Sadofsky, M. (1992). *Legacy of Trust: Life After the Sudbury Valley School Experience*. Framingham, MA: Sudbury Valley School Press.

Gregory, T. (1993). *Making High School Work: Lessons from the Open School*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Henig, J. (1996). The Local Dynamics of Choice: Ethnic Preferences and Institutional Responses. In B. Fuller & R. Elmore (Eds.), *Who Chooses? Who Looses? Culture, Institutions, and the Unequal Effects of School Choice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Henry, M. (1993). *School Cultures: Universes of Meaning in Private Schools*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corp.

Hern, M. (Ed.). (1996). *Deschooling Our Lives*. Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers.

Illich, I. (1971). *Deschooling Society*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Koetzsch, R. (1997). *The Parents Guide to Alternatives in Education*. Boston: Shambhala Press.

Kohl, H. (1969). *The Open Classroom: A Practical Guide to a New Way of Teaching*. New York: Random House.

Krishnamurti, J. (1953). *Education and the Significance of Life*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Krishnamurti, J. (1981). *The Intent of the Krishnamurti Schools*, [Web document (from speech at Brockwood Park, England, 1 September 1981)]. Krishnamurti Information Network. Available: http://www.kinfonet.org/Community/schools/about_schools.htm [2002, March 22].

Marshak, D. (1997). *The Common Vision: Parenting and Educating for Wholeness*. New York: Peter Lang.

Martin, R. (2000). *What Is Real School Choice? A Research Paper on School Choice Issues Using Research on Family Considerations to Argue Against the Market Metaphor*. http://www.PathsofLearning.net/archives/. Available: http://www.PathofLearning.net/archives/schoolchoice.htm.

Mayhew, K. C., & Edwards, A. C. (1936). *The Dewey School: The Laboratory School of the University of Chicago*. New York, NY: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc.

Mercogliano, C. (1997). *Making It Up As We Go ALong: The Story of the Albany Free School*: Heinneman Press.

Miller, J. (1996). *The Holistic Curriculum*. Toronto, Canada: Ontario Institute for Studies in

Education Press.

Miller, R. (1997). *What Are School For? Holistic Education in American Culture* (Third ed.). Brandon, VT: Holistic Education Press.

Miller, R. (1999). *Introduction to Holistic Education*, [WWW Document]. Available: http://www.PathsOfLearning.net/archives/holistic-educ-intro.htm.

Miller, R. (2000a). *Caring for New Life: Essays on Holistic Education*. Brandon, VT: Foundation for Educational Renewal.

Miller, R. (Ed.). (2000b). *Creating Learning Communities*. Brandon, VT: Foundation for Educational Renewal.

Mintz, J. (Ed.). (1994). *Almanac of Education Choices*. New York: MacMillan Publishing.

Palmer, P. (1983). *To Know as We Are Known: A Spirituality of Education*. San Francisco, CA: Harper.

Palmer, P. (2000). *The Clearness Committee: A Communal Approach To Discernment* (Related Resources: Related Writings), [Web document]. Center for Teacher Formation. Available: http://www.teacherformation.org/html/rr/index.cfm [2002, March 22].

Skenes, R. (1978). *Free Forming: Greater Personal Fulfillment Through Living Democracy*. Colonial Beach, VA: DaySpring.

Skenes, R. (2000). Experimenting with Futuristic Systems of Learning. In R. Miller (Ed.), *Creating Learning Communities*. Brandon, VT: Foundation for Educational Renewal.

Smith, M. (1996, June 20, 2001). *Folk High Schools: a survey of their development and listing of key texts*, [Web document]. Informal Education Homepage. Available: http://www.infed.org/schooling/b-folk.htm [2002, March 22].

Wells, A. S. (1996). African-American Students' View of School Choice. In B. Fuller & R. Elmore (Eds.), *Who Chooses? Who Looses? Culture, Institutions, and the Unequal Effects of School Choice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Wilber, K. (1995). *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications.

Witte, J. F. (2000). *The Market Approach to Education: An Analysis of America's First Voucher Program*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

End Notes

[1] Educational philosophy professor David Owen, Iowa State University, has begun to compile the lectures of Richard McKeon who uses freedom as a primary example in distinguishing four "modes of thought." These modes of thought are roughly parallel to behavioralism, humanistic education, progressive education, and Platonic approaches to education. This framework may be of special use to researchers of educational alternatives.

[2] Social psychologist Basil Bernstein distinguishes performance-based pedagogy from competency-based pedagogy, with the latter showing qualities similar to many less formal learning environments as well as educational alternatives (Bernstein, 1996).

[3] "Learning communities" is a term increasingly used across disciplines in education to reference a number of different trends. When I use it, I am referring especially to "cooperative community life-long learning centers." This phenomenon is described by the Coalition for Self-Learning in its new book, Creating Learning Communities (Miller, R., 2000b). In brief, the term "learning communities" implies a variety of democratic and person-centered approaches to education which are ecological and life-centered rather than driven by economic forces.

[4] For a more extended summary of the history of educational alternatives, see Ron Miller's *What Are Schools For? (Miller, R., 1997)*. For a brief summary of the educational contributions of John Holt, Paul Goodman, Ivan Illich, and Paulo Freire, see *"Pioneers in Community-Based Education" (Miller, R., 2000b, , p. 22-24)*.

[5] Integrated curriculum was popularized as a formal concept in education by John Dewey over a century ago; detailed reference to its successful application in an elementary-age school can be found in *The Dewey School: The Laboratory School of the University of Chicago* (Mayhew & Edwards, 1936). More recently, authors and educators in both mainstream and alternative education have written much on this topic. Particularly noteworthy is Edward Clark Jr's *Designing and Implementing an Integrated Curriculum: A Student-Centered Approach (*. Brandon, VT: Psychology (Clark, 1997). For further resources, you can select "Integrated Curriculum" from thematic searches in the Paths of Learning Resource Center, www.PathsofLearning.net

[6] For insightful and scholarly discussions on the integration of ecological, spiritual, and social topics in schools and classrooms, read the quarterly journal *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice* (published by Psychology Press/Holistic Education Press, http://www.great-ideas.org/). For examples of panoramic course offerings in a unique Seattle alternative, see: http://www.pscs.org/information/tutorial/offerings.html.

[7] The case for relevancy in learning is often a source of discussion in traditional education, and individual teachers who are good at their craft often do quite well in helping students understand the relevancy of academic subjects. However, when examining the actual practices of schools, the structures and politics built into the mainstream system appear to reinforce the standardization of curricula, which could be considered a step away from the priority of relevance in students' lives. For more information concerning trends against standardization, see *Standardized Tests and Alternative Forms of Evaluation*, http://www.PathsOfLearning.net/archives/test2001.html. Especially noteworthy for compiling concrete research are the works of author and activist Alfie Kohn, www.alfiekohn.org.

[8] Summerhill became well-known in the 1960s with the popularized publication of *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing* by A.S. Neill (with Foreword by Erich Fromm). The book was edited and updated by David Albert and released again in 1995 as *Summerhill: A New View of Childhood* (St Martin's Press). In addition, a new book authored by Michael Appleton was released in 2000 offering another perspective on the school entitled *A Free Range Childhood: Summerhill and the Principle of Self-Regulation* (Foundation for Educational Renewal).

[9] Play Mountain Place was founded by Phyliss Fleishmann in the early 1950s; a full length article by Erika Schickel about the school's history can be found in *Paths of Learning*, Issue #4 (April 2000). The Albany Free School was founded in 1969 by Mary Leue, and articles about it are in *Paths of Learning*, Issue #1; in addition, there is a full length book entitled *Making It Up As We Go ALong: The Story of the Albany Free School* (Mercogliano, 1997). The Children's Village School in rural Thailand was founded in 1979, by Rajani and Pibhop Dhongchai, and is based on Buddhist principles alongside Summerhillian philosophies (Dhongchai & Dhongchai, 1997). Formal research on the outcomes of a democratic school across two decades can be found in *Legacy of Trust*, which carefully documents the stories of students after they left Sudbury Valley School (Greenberg & Sadofsky, 1992).

[10] Sudbury Valley School was founded in 1968, and currently promotes model-schools around the country by offering "how-to" kits on creating other democratic schools in this style. The Sudbury Valley Press offers numerous books, including *Free at Last* (Greenberg, 1987) which provides a portrait of the school.

[11] Myles Horton was perhaps the first well-known American "radical" (emancipatory/popular) educator with his founding of what is now called the Highlander Research and Education Center, www.hrec.org.

[12] Paulo Freire, 1921-1997, is an oft quoted author of critical pedagogy, perhaps best know for his publication of

Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 1970). For more references, visit *Infed*'s profile of Freire and his works: www.infed.org/thinkers/et-freir.htm.

[13] In addition to the FPEAA web site, other meta-resources for learning about movements connected directly or indirectly with folk education include: The Simple Living Network www.simpleliving.net/, and *Creating Learning Communities* with its resource section of links to several types of educational alternatives, including folk education, www.creatinglearningcommunities.org.

[14] These homeschooling statistics are from a report entitled "Issues Related to Estimating the Home-Schooled Population in the United States with National Household Survey Data" compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics. This 110-page technical report details why homeschooling statistics and trends are difficult to estimate. These statistics reported from 1994 to 1996, which indicated an almost doubling in the number of homeschoolers ages 6 to 17, may contain several misleading sources of data collection errors. This report was accessed online at: http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2000311

[15] For summaries and bibliographic references to books by Grace Llewellyn and Linda Dobson, as well as other unschooling classics and homeschooling references, see www.PathsofLearning.net/archives/unschooling1999.html. In addition, a summary article by Linda Dobson about unschooling, along with an online action guide and an interview with Grace Llewellyn are in Issue #2 of *Paths of Learning* (October 1999).

[16] Author James Peterson described Krishnamurti schools as having a "methodless method" in *Paths of Learning*, Issue #5 (July 2000). Similarly, within Krishnamurti's own teachings, he often spoke of truth as a "pathless land." For more on Krishamurti's extensive teachings, Education and the Significance of Life (Krishnamurti, 1953) is a good starting place, with access to other resources on his philosophy and schools available at www.PathsofLearning.net/archives/Krishnamurti2000.html

[17] Don Glines's *Creating Educational Futures: Continuous Mankato Wilson Alternatives* describes 69 specific and radical changes for a year-round open school that operated for 10 years in Minnesota (Glines, 1995). The Mountain Open School is described in Tom Gregory's book *Making High School Work: Lessons from the Open School* (1993). The Saint Paul Open School was studied along with nine other free and open schools in a qualitative research study by Robert Skenes entitled *Free Forming: Greater Personal Fulfillment Through Living Democracy* (Skenes, 1978).

[18] One well-documented qualitative study by Mary Henry compares a Waldorf school to a private Catholic school by examining the details of their cultures in terms of myths, curricula, rituals, and relationships. This study is told in *School Cultures: Universes of Meaning in Private Schools* (Henry, 1993). In another independent study, David Marshak compares the philosophies and daily practices of schools based on the educational principles of Rudolf Steiner, Sri Aurobindo, and Inayat Khan, described in *The Common Vision: Parenting and Educating for Wholeness (Marshak, 1997)*. Most other detailed descriptions of Waldorf schools come from organizations such as the Association for Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA), http://www.waldorfeducation.org; Rudolf Steiner Library,web site: http://www.anthroposophy.org/; or Rudolf Steiner Press, http://www.rudolfsteinerpress.com/.

[19] J.E. Chubb and T. M. Moe, *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools (1990)*. This is an often-cited study that uses a database from a 1980 survey of 60,000 students in 1,000 public and private schools. Chubb and Moe's interpretation of the data highlights a strong relationship between student performance and school utonomy, as well as the importance of schools having clear goals, ambitious academic programs, strong educational leadership, and high levels of teacher professionalism.

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

ERIC®

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Alternatives in Education: An Exploration of Learner-Centered, Progressive, and Holistic Education	
Author(s): Robin Ann Martin	
Corporate Source:	Publication Date:

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1 ☑

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) and paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A ☐

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B ☐

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, → please

Signature: Robin Ann Martin		Printed Name/Position/Title: Robin Martin, Education Programs Assist.	
Organization/Address: EnCompass, 11011 Tyler Foote Rd, Nevada City, CA 95959		Telephone: 530-292-1000	FAX: 530-292-
		E-Mail Address: robin@EnCompass-NLR.org	Date: 4/3/02

(over)

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, *or*, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
1129 SHRIVER LAB
COLLEGE PARK, MD 20742-5701
ATTN: ACQUISITIONS

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
4483-A Forbes Boulevard
Lanham, Maryland 20706

Telephone: 301-552-4200
Toll Free: 800-799-3742
FAX: 301-552-4700
e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov
WWW: http://ericfac.piccard.csc.com

EFF-088 (Rev. 2/2000)